

The Role of Reconnaissance in the Counterattack

A Monograph

by

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Following an enemy attack, reconnaissance forces must quickly acquire the information required to define the new operational environment. Tactical reconnaissance provides the operational commander the information required to execute the counterattack at the right time, place, and purpose. Two case studies, MG William B. Kean's US 25 th Infantry Division in the Korean War (1950) and MG Ariel Sharon's Israeli 143 rd Armored Division in the Yom Kippur War (1973), demonstrate how ground reconnaissance forces contributed to the success or failure of the counterattack in austere environments. The monograph concludes with three recommendations for future publications of FM 3-90-1, <i>Offense and Defense</i> and FM 3-98, <i>Reconnaissance and Security Operations</i> . Fighting from a position of relative disadvantage is foreign to our generation of officers and leaders. Without personal experience, leaders require doctrine and training. By understanding the risks and opportunities of the counterattack, military professionals become resilient amidst the worst conditions.					
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Abstract

The Role of Reconnaissance in the Counterattack by LTC Scott Pence, US Army, 48 pages.

Following an enemy attack, reconnaissance forces must quickly acquire the information required to define the new operational environment. Under ideal conditions, satellite imagery and unmanned aerial systems provide adequate situational awareness. Against a committed adversary, however, modern commanders must anticipate Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) feeds to drop; cellular reception to be inconsistent, exploited, or absent; satellite communications to be lost; and radio communication to be degraded. In this environment, tactical reconnaissance provides the operational commander the information required to execute the counterattack at the right time, place, and purpose.

Two case studies, MG William B. Kean's US 25th Infantry Division in the Korean War (1950) and MG Ariel Sharon's Israeli 143rd Armored Division in the Yom Kippur War (1973), demonstrate how ground reconnaissance forces contributed to the success or failure of the counterattack in austere environments.

The monograph concludes with three recommendations for future publications of FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* and FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*.

Fighting from a position of relative disadvantage is foreign to our generation of officers and leaders. Without personal experience, leaders require doctrine and training. By understanding the risks and opportunities of the counterattack, military professionals become resilient amidst the worst conditions.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Acronyms	viii
Tables and Figures.....	ix
Introduction	1
Research Question.....	5
Case Study Selection.....	5
Theoretical Framework of Reconnaissance.....	6
Doctrinal Framework of Reconnaissance.....	10
Theoretical Framework of the Counterattack.....	12
Doctrinal Framework of the Counterattack.....	13
Section Two: Task Force Kean's Counterattack, 1950	18
Section Three: Sharon's Counterattack, 1973	24
Section Four: Synthesis and Recommendations.....	31
Conclusion.....	39
Bibliography.....	45

Acknowledgements

First, I should note the influence of the 1-32 Armor Battalion's Scout Platoon on my impression of reconnaissance. As a tank platoon leader in 1999, the Bandit Scout Platoon was the most elite and most professional unit I knew. At the National Training Center, observers noted how these scouts seemed to disappear into the terrain. The platoon leader, an elite position, was mature and competent and the platoon sergeant gruff and demanding. The senior scout, a Staff Sergeant, carried himself like a martial arts master, calmly teaching younger scouts the tradecraft of reconnaissance. From that moment on, I maintain a profound respect and admiration for reconnaissance professionals.

I must also thank Combined Arms Research Library Research Assistant, Mr. Rusty Rafferty. Rusty, besides possessing the most alliterative name in Fort Leavenworth, also was a reliable resource for my obscure requests.

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Acronyms

ACR	Armored Cavalry Regiment
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ARB	Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
ATGM	Anti-Tank Guided Missile
AOC	Army Operating Concept
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
F3EA	Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze
FAB	Field Artillery Battalion
FM	Field Manual
ID	Infantry Division
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JP	Joint Publication
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
RSTA	Reconnaissance Surveillance and Target Acquisition
SAM	Surface to Air Missile
TF	Task Force
UAS	Unmanned Aerial System
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
US	United States
UVDDLA	Understand, Visualize, Describe, Direct, Lead, Assess
WAS	Wide Area Security

Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1: Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance in TF Kean's Counterattack.....	23
Table 2: Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance in MG Sharon's Counterattack	31
Table 3: Comparison of Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance	31

Figures

Figure 1: Reconnaissance and security roles during the five stages of the defense	34
Figure 2: Counterattack Spectrum.....	39

Introduction

No arm is as well suited to exploit the success of other arms as is the cavalry.

— Helmuth von Moltke, *The Art of War*

A fictional Major General (MG) Morris sits alone in his makeshift headquarters set in an occupied savings bank in a remote eastern European village. Days prior, enemy forces launched a vicious attack which decimated his sister division to the east. Deployed forward for a multi-lateral partnership exercise, they never expected the surprise assault. In his sector, much further west, everything went black. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) literally dropped out of the sky. Enemy cyber hackers exploited the few electronics which survived what soldiers termed “the blackout.” MG Morris’s own secure iPhone now buzzed with an incoming message, obviously from enemy hackers, offering generous terms of surrender for individuals or unit commanders. With his forces arrayed in a hasty defense, Morris considers his options.¹

Although he lacked situational awareness, he knew his forces had two days of supply including wartime ammunition. Following the enemy assault, his forces occupied defensive positions and assembled a reserve. His training taught him to seize and retain the initiative.

¹ What soldiers referred to as “the blackout” would be a high-altitude nuclear detonation which would propel an electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) hundreds of kilometers from the blast. A 2004 report to Congress explains the capabilities of a militarized EMP. Source: US House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, “The Report of the Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack,” 108th Cong., 2d sess., 2004, HR Rep. 108-37. The instance of UAVs “dropping from the sky” occurred in 2014 to Ukrainian UAVs as a result of Russian jamming platforms and targeting of ground control stations. Source: Patrick Tucker, “In Ukraine, Tomorrow’s Drone War is Alive Today,” Defense One, March 9, 2015, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/03/ukraine-tomorrows-drone-war-alive-today/107085/>. The hacked secure iPhone is imagined by the author to represent an unprecedented level of cyber warfare.

Rather than stay in place, he decided to attack. He gripped his secure phone, replied “NUTS,” and crushed the phone under his feet.²

Few operations are as precarious as the counterattack. The defense has enough trouble surviving enemy attacks. When placed in the defense against his will, a successful commander must orient available forces to the critical time and place to wrest the initiative from the enemy. Commanders who counterattack too soon risk meeting the enemy at his strongest. Acting too late risks the loss of surprise and finding a reinforced enemy. How large is the force? What is the purpose - to destroy the enemy or disrupt the enemy’s momentum? The commander must answer these questions quickly within the fog of war with intuition, creativity, and precision. The cost of failure is loss of life and enemy advantage. To increase the probability of success, the commander needs timely and accurate information. Without it, he risks dangerously misunderstanding the situation.

Following an enemy attack, reconnaissance forces must quickly acquire the information required to define the new operational environment. Avenues of approach, once open, might now be closed due to enemy presence. Enemy forces might occupy flanks once secured by friendly units. Obstacles, once impermeable, might suddenly have crossings that provide enemy forces freedom of maneuver. The mission variables of enemy, terrain, time, and civilian considerations all require reassessment due to the deliberately audacious actions of the enemy. After a surprise attack, all previous facts become assumptions that require confirmation or denial.

²Surrounded by German forces on December 22, 1944, Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, acting Commander of the 101st Airborne Division, responded to the German forces with one word: NUTS! S.L.A. Marshall, *Bastogne: The First Eight Days* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 116.

Under ideal conditions, satellite imagery and unmanned aerial systems provide adequate situational awareness. FM 3-55, *Information Collection* (2013) provides guidance for operational commands to capitalize on the diverse capabilities provided by tactical, operational, joint, and national assets. Technologically advanced sensors serve an integral role in understanding the operational environment. Tactical reconnaissance forces, such as those organic to Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) add the human dynamic. Collection managers plan redundant coverage over critical targets and enable sensors to cue others to maintain contact throughout the depth of a sector.³

To complicate this effort, modern adversaries integrate their most sophisticated cyber and signals jamming technology. Laurie Buckhout, former chief of the US Army's electronic warfare division stated, "Russia maintains an ability to destroy command-and-control networks by jamming radio communications, radars and GPS signals."⁴ Against a committed adversary, modern commanders must anticipate Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) feeds to drop; cellular reception to be inconsistent, exploited, or absent; satellite communications to be lost; and radio communication to be degraded. To assume otherwise would be irresponsible.⁵

Tactical reconnaissance provides the operational commander the information required to execute the counterattack at the right time, place, and purpose. Only after regaining situational

³Field Manual (FM) 3-55, *Information Collection*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Press, 2013).

⁴Joe Gould, "Electronic Warfare: What the US Army Can Learn from Ukraine," *Defense News*, August 4, 2015, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/08/02/us-army-ukraine-russia-electronic-warfare/30913397/>.

⁵ For more information on unclassified threat capabilities: US Joint Irregular Warfare Center, *Irregular Adversaries and Hybrid Threats: An Assessment - 2011* (Washington DC, Government Printing Press, 2011), 28; and Paul McLeary, "Russia's Winning the Electronic War," *Foreign Policy*, October 21, 2015, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/21/russia-winning-the-electronic-war/>.

awareness can the commander make responsible decisions on the execution of the counterattack; no amount of audacity or élan can compensate for a poorly timed or insufficiently powerful counterattack. On the contrary, a failed counterattack can expedite defeat of the entire force. Therefore, it is imperative that reconnaissance forces provide the commander with an accurate understanding of the operational environment to enable the most effective counterattack. In the Boer War (1899), British Field Marshal Paul S. Methuen, the 3rd Baron Methuen, counterattacked with a 3,000-man force against what appeared to be 2,500 lightly-armed Boers. He did so without reconnaissance. “Since he could not see the enemy, he wrongly assumed that no enemy was there...All went well until they were in within easy range of the Boers, who had concealed themselves, with what was subsequently described as ‘fiendish cunning’ below the deep banks of a river.” There were, in actuality, 8,000 Boers awaiting his advance. Tactical reconnaissance forces are uniquely capable of discovering critical information to confirm or deny assumptions. The philosophy of mission command coupled with robust communications and field-craft allow scouts to provide all-weather information required for an accurate situational understanding of the new operational environment.⁶

This analysis examines the relationship between tactical reconnaissance forces and the operational counterattack. Section One reviews the existing theory and doctrine relating to reconnaissance and the counterattack. Section Two reviews the role of reconnaissance in MG William B. Kean’s 1950 counterattack from the Pusan Perimeter. Section Three reviews the role of reconnaissance in MG Ariel Sharon’s 1973 counterattack in the Yom Kippur War. Section Four synthesizes the insights from the case studies and introduces recommendations for future publications. The paper concludes with a resolution to MG Morris’s fictional situation and reflects upon the value of studying the counterattack.

⁶ Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London: Pimlico Books, 1994), 57.

Research Question

How do tactical reconnaissance forces increase the likelihood of counterattack success at the operational level? Based on prior experience and reconnaissance doctrine, the hypothesized answer proposes that the tactical reconnaissance force confirms or denies the assumptions of the post-attack operational environment, allowing the commander to understand the situation and make informed decisions on the employment of his forces. All this must be done in a timely manner and while keeping a cunning enemy from his goals. In the midst of the chaos and confusion, a framework for understanding the counterattack can plausibly expedite the process and enhance the results. As Carl von Clausewitz asserted, “principles and rules are intended to provide a thinking man with a frame of reference …rather than to serve as a guide which at the moment of action lays out precisely the path he must take.” This research highlights historical counterattacks to enhance the US Army’s current doctrinal framework on the role of reconnaissance in the counterattack. To do so, two historical serve as case studies.⁷

Case Study Selection

The following case studies present situations in which an operational commander arrayed his forces to transition from the defense to offense. While history provides many examples of counterattacks, this research narrowed the study to two similar counterattacks by controlling for technology, unit size, purpose, and the time period. First, both case studies occurred without UAS, GPS, and satellite capabilities and in both events radio communications were unreliable or degraded by the enemy. This is akin to operations under the communications “blackout” featured in MG Morris’s dilemma. Studying operations under these conditions is instructive because future adversaries will attempt to impose this condition on US Army forces. Second, both case

⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated and edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 141.

studies feature similar variables of unit size and purpose. Both counterattacks involved a tactical (company or battalion) reconnaissance force in support of an operational (division or corps) counterattack. The research excluded large counteroffensives like the Battle of Tannenberg in WWI and the Battle of Kursk in WWII. Third, the research controlled for differences in eras by narrowing the period of observation to conflicts between WWII (1945) and the Gulf War (1991). Clearly, comparing Blücher's use of horse cavalry at Waterloo (1815) against Sharon's use of tanks in the Sinai (1973) would be inappropriate. Finally, the research excluded those counterattacks which lacked the means to succeed no matter how skillfully their operational commanders used their tactical reconnaissance forces. Studying the exploits of reconnaissance forces in support of an Iraqi counterattack in The Gulf War (1991), for example, would lead to spurious conclusions since the Iraqis lacked the means to seize and retain the initiative against coalition forces.

By controlling for the variables of technology, unit size, purpose, and the time period, the analysis attempted to uncover insights on the role of reconnaissance forces on the outcome of the counterattack. The research found correlations between the application of reconnaissance forces and successful counterattacks, however, the differences in weather, terrain, leadership, and other variables prevented any claims of causation. The focus of this research is how the tactical reconnaissance element contributed to the outcome of the counterattack. Before reviewing the historical events, the next section provides a review of existing literature about both reconnaissance and the counterattack.

Theoretical Framework of Reconnaissance

The root of the word, reconnaissance, is the French verb, *connaître*, “to know.” Random House Dictionary estimates that the Old French word, *reconoistre*, “to explore,” arose in 1800-1810 from the word, *recognitione*. Recognition is a word that co-evolved in the English language to mean acknowledgement of an obligation and infers a trusted agent. The multiple

layers of meaning within the word origin enable a deeper understanding of reconnaissance forces.

Reconnaissance units are trusted forces who explore in order to achieve knowledge.⁸

In his 2002 book, *Intelligence*, John Keegan focused on reconnaissance forces through history. He noted the Roman system identified three levels of reconnaissance troops: “*procursatores*, who performed close reconnaissance immediately ahead of the army; *exploratores*, longer-range scouts; and *speculators*, who spied deeper into enemy territory.” Julius Caesar, in the Gallic Wars in 58-50 BC, professionalized his scouts and implemented a policy of direct access by scouts to the commander, himself. The method of observing and hearing the enemy and then passing the information by word of mouth and horseback persisted throughout the Roman Empire.⁹

The nineteenth century military theorist, Antoine-Henri Jomini, listed five levels of intelligence: “reconnaissances, spies, bodies of light troops commanded by capable officers, signals, and questioning of deserters and prisoners.” Jomini advised his readers that a commander should never ascribe “perfect reliance” on any one source of information; but should rather “multiply the means of obtaining information.” A review of *The Art of War* demonstrated Jomini’s (and the era’s) lack of appreciation for forces responsible for gathering intelligence for the commander. Jomini filled the thirteen pages of Article XVL, *Cavalry Employment*, with refinements to cavalry charges, but omitted any comment on the role of cavalry in gathering information. Jomini noted that the Russian army “is better provided than any other for gathering information, by the use of roving bodies of Cossacks” but failed to expand upon the

⁸ Random House Dictionary, accessed on 6 November 2015.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/search/recognition> and <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/search/reconnaissance>.

⁹ John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: The Value – and Limitations – of What the Military Can Learn About the Enemy* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 9.

characteristics which make it so. Cavalry forces executed reconnaissance and security tasks in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but neither Jomini nor Clausewitz focused on cavalry in that role. The systematic use of cavalry for reconnaissance did not appear until the late nineteenth century when the Prussian general and military theorist, Helmuth von Moltke, reorganized the Prussian Army.¹⁰

Assessing the performance of his cavalry forces in the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, Moltke noted that his cavalry was “a thoroughly useless drag on the army.”¹¹ Moltke observed that rifled weapons defeated the shock effect of the cavalry charge. His reforms, implemented in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, created the modern reconnaissance force. While his contemporaries were arming their cavalry to withstand modern firepower, Moltke removed armor in order to allow greater mobility. Prussia transformed its cavalry to a dispersed reconnaissance force. Prussian cavalrymen, selected by merit not by birth, learned French so they could probe deep into the French heartland, gather information, and harass vulnerable rear areas. Historian Geoffrey Wawro noted, “As they fanned across thirty or forty miles of frontage, they continually subdivided, regiments throwing out squadrons, squadrons throwing out troops, troops throwing out single riders to scour the countryside.” Until motorized and mechanized forces, light cavalry on horseback would be the fastest moving and deepest forces on the battlefield.¹²

¹⁰ Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, Translated and edited by G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 143. Cavalry employment appears from 303-315. The comment on Russian Cossacks appears on 315.

¹¹ Ernst Schmedes, “Die Taktik der Preussen beim Ausbruche des Feldzuges 1870,” OMZ 3 (1871), 194-6, quoted in Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 61.

¹² Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 61-64.

In the twentieth century, Mao Tse-Tung identified the critical role of reconnaissance in the counterattack. “The right moment should be determined with due regard to both the enemy’s situation and our own and to the relation between the two. In order to know the enemy’s situation, we should collect information.” Mao highlighted Sun Tzu’s maxim, “He who knows the enemy and himself will never in a hundred battles be at risk.” Mao recognized the integral role of information and situational understanding in enabling the commander to transition from the defense to the offense.¹³

The British military theorist and historian, B.H. Liddell Hart, introduced the “Man in the Dark” theory of war in 1920. Reflecting on the great dispersal of forces in WWI, Liddell Hart noted that the fog of war was similar to two men fighting in a dark room. For one man to be successful, he argued, he must first find his foe, then reconnoiter to find his weakness (his throat), fix him in place so he cannot maneuver, and then launch a decisive attack on his vulnerable point to create paralysis. “Now in order to destroy the enemy we must first find him... we must reconnoitre or search the enemy so that we can definitely locate the main body.” For Liddell Hart, success in warfare occurred in five phases: find, reconnoiter, fix, attack, and exploit.¹⁴ The lineage of Hart’s theory is the modern concept of Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, and Analyze (commonly abbreviated as F3EA). The main difference is that the F3EA cycle never ends; the cycle continues indefinitely as each analysis leads to new ways to find targets to later fix and

¹³ Mao Tse-Tung, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 107. Sun-Tzu, *The Art of Warfare*, translated by Robert Ames (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 113.

¹⁴ B.H. Liddell Hart, “The ‘Man in the Dark’ Theory of War” in *The Living Age*, ed. Eliakim Littell and Robert S. Littell, Vol 306 (Chicago: Living Age Company, 1920), 237.

finish them. General Stanley A. McChrystal, while targeting al Qaeda elements in Iraq, used the F3EA cycle to dismantle al Qaeda in Iraq.¹⁵

Theoretically, reconnaissance is an arm of the intelligence warfighting function, however, the ability of reconnaissance forces to maneuver, engage with, and destroy enemies is a recurrent topic for discussion and debate. In a 2011 monograph, Colonel Christopher N. Prigge chronicled the development of the Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR). In 1946, a US Army study determined that modern reconnaissance forces needed an organization to execute the full range of traditional horse cavalry missions including reconnaissance, security, offensive combat, and defensive combat. The ACR, which proved its ability to fight for information in the 1991 Gulf War, persisted until 2011. Due to the lethality of the ACRs, much of US Army reconnaissance doctrine during this period focused on cavalry's dual responsibilities to provide security and reconnaissance. The US Army's largest reconnaissance force, today, is the Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) squadron. Each Brigade Combat Team (BCT) has one RSTA squadron responsible to the brigade commander for reconnaissance and security tasks. The next section presents the doctrine which supports this new relationship.¹⁶

Doctrinal Framework of Reconnaissance

Chapter One of FM 3-90-2, *Reconnaissance, Security, and Tactical Enabling Tasks* (2013), introduces the seven Fundamentals of Reconnaissance. The first fundamental is to, “Ensure continuous reconnaissance.” Throughout all phases of an operation, “continuous reconnaissance provides commanders with a constant flow of information.” Even when the

¹⁵ Stanley A. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task, A Memoir* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 153-154.

¹⁶ Christopher N. Prigge, “Using Combat Experience to Transform the Cavalry: The US Forces European Theater Study of Mechanized Cavalry Units” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 64.

operation is complete, reconnaissance forces continue to report on enemy forces in order to anticipate enemy actions and allow staffs to plan future operations. The second fundamental is, “Do not keep reconnaissance assets in the reserve.” The authors of FM 3-90-2 (2012) clarified that the second fundamental does not mean that reconnaissance forces are never rotated for sustainment or rest. This fundamental is in place, rather, to ensure commanders deliberately plan for sustained reconnaissance operations. “At times, this requires the commander to withhold or position reconnaissance assets to ensure they are available at critical times and places.” The third fundamental states, “Orient on the reconnaissance objective.” Reconnaissance objectives are terrain features, threat forces, or civilian considerations which answer commanders’ critical information requirements. “When the reconnaissance unit does not have enough time to complete all the tasks...it uses the reconnaissance objective to guide it in settling priorities.” The fourth fundamental, “Report information rapidly and accurately,” is important to allow staffs maximum time to receive and analyze the information. The fifth fundamental is, “Retain freedom of maneuver.” When reconnaissance forces become mired in battle, they cease to be a source of information. Instead, reconnaissance forces make contact with the smallest possible element and rely on indirect fires to avoid decisive engagement. The sixth fundamental is, “Gain and maintain enemy contact.” Gaining enemy contact does not imply that the reconnaissance force needs to be in direct fire contact. Usually, sustained surveillance is sufficient to maintain contact. Clear rules of engagement and disengagement criteria are critical features of any reconnaissance mission. The seventh fundamental, “Develop the situation rapidly,” highlights the dynamic nature of reconnaissance operations. “Cavalry forces act instinctively and urgently to increase the commander’s situational understanding of the terrain, enemy, and civilian populace.” Each case study in this monograph concludes with an assessment based upon these seven fundamentals.¹⁷

¹⁷ Field Manual (FM) 3-90-2, *Reconnaissance, Security, and Tactical Enabling Tasks*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2013), 1-2 through 1-12.

FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations* (2015), is the capstone document for modern tactical reconnaissance operations. Reconnaissance forces conduct five distinct forms of reconnaissance and five forms of security. The five forms of reconnaissance are zone, area, route, reconnaissance in force, and special reconnaissance. The five forms of security are screen, guard, cover, area security and local security. All of these forms of reconnaissance and security can have a role in the counterattack. Although FM 3-98 (2015) provides a comprehensive listing of doctrinal terms and concepts within the reconnaissance field, it provides no guidance on the role of reconnaissance forces in the counterattack.¹⁸

The importance of ground reconnaissance forces to the counterattack is intuitively clear, however, US Army doctrine does not explicitly provide guidance to reconnaissance forces in the pursuit of objectives specific to the counterattack. The next section reviews the theoretical writings of the counterattack and concludes with a review of the counterattack within US Army doctrine.

Theoretical Framework of the Counterattack

An understanding of the counterattack is only possible through the study of the defense. Carl von Clausewitz, in *On War*, described the three distinct phases of the defense. Phase one is the preparation of the defense in which “the defender waits for the attack in position, having chosen a suitable area and prepared it; which means he has carefully reconnoitered it.” Phase two is the defensive battle. Phase three is the counterattack. Clausewitz explained, “when the enemy has revealed his whole plan and spent the major part of his forces, the defender intends to fling his body against a part of the enemy forces, thus opening a minor offensive battle of his own...in

¹⁸ Field Manual (FM) 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2015).

order to produce a total reversal.” To Clausewitz, the counterattack reversed the momentum and seized the initiative from the attacker.¹⁹

Mao Tse-Tung wrote extensively about the value of the active defense in his 1936 memoirs of the Chinese Civil War. He noted that immature revolutionaries were reluctant to go on the defense because they equated the defense with defeat or retreat, “thus mentally disarming themselves in the matter of defense.” Mao argued that the adverse political effects of the defense is strictly a problem for capitalist countries. He noted that the opposite effect occurs when revolutionary movements adopt the defense. He wrote, “the only real defense is the active defense, defense for the purpose of counter-attacking and taking the offensive.”²⁰

Communist co-founder Karl Marx, in contrast to Mao, stressed the offense as a distinctly proletariat method of warfare. Soviet doctrine of mobile defense stressed “constant harassment and counterattacks, firm control over withdrawal, and ‘scorched earth’ or destruction of resources useful to the enemy in areas to be abandoned.” The Soviet *Field Regulations* (1936) directed: “For the counterattack all free forces must be used. The counterattack must be conducted to the reestablishment of the advance border.”²¹

The need for information collection and the presence of counterattacks existed throughout military history. The role of tactical reconnaissance forces, on the other hand, evolved with varying levels of technology and enemy capabilities. As theory, history, and doctrine are all interrelated, the research transitions to a review of doctrinal framework of the counterattack.

Doctrinal Framework of the Counterattack

¹⁹ Clausewitz, 390-391.

²⁰ Mao, 104-105.

²¹ Raymond Garthoff, *How Russia Makes War* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954), 65. The first quotation appears on page 77. The Soviet doctrine appears in a translation of *Vremennyi Polevoi Ustav RKKA, 1936* (Alexandria: Joint Publications Research Service), 1986

Current US Army doctrine provides sparse and conflicting guidance to assist commanders and staffs who find themselves involuntarily transitioned to the defense. Definitions for *counterattack* and *counteroffensive* do not exist in the Department of Defense Dictionary, *Counterattack* appears only as part of the definition for active defense: “the employment of limited offensive action and counterattacks to deny a contested area or position to the enemy.” JP 1-02’s definition is insufficient and misleading because it unnecessarily scales the counterattack as a limited offensive action and needlessly restricts the focus of the counterattack on terrain (an area or position) when the purpose could be the enemy force, itself.²²

The Army’s definition is more descriptive. Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (2013), states,

Counterattack – Attack by part or all of a defending force against an enemy attacking force, for such specific purposes as regaining ground lost, or cutting off or destroying enemy advance units, and with the general objective of denying to the enemy the attainment of the enemy’s purpose in attacking. In sustained defensive operations, it is undertaken to restore the battle position and is directed at limited objectives.²³

The definition is insufficient because it, like JP 1-02 (2015), limits the counterattack to “restore the battle position” and “limited objectives” and includes a cumbersome passage about “denying to the enemy the attainment of the enemy’s purpose in attacking.” Although meant to be a catch-all term, it is not, and runs counter to historical example. Napoleon’s counterattack at Austerlitz in 1805 ranks among the most decisive counterattacks in history and it focused neither on limited objectives, nor restoring battle positions. At Austerlitz, “the Emperor [Napoleon] had to devise stratagem which would lead the enemy to uncover his own flank.”²⁴ Feigning weakness, the

²² Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2015), 1.

²³ Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2015), 1-16.

²⁴ David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966), 410-411. Italics mine.

French forces defended until the Allies vacated the decisive point at the Pratzen Heights in pursuit of a deceptively weak French left flank. Then, Napoleon counterattacked with forces concealed in rugged terrain combined with a simultaneous new attack from Davout's corps marching from Vienna. Napoleon's counterattack at Austerlitz led to a decisive defeat of the allied forces. As such, the event represents a historical counterexample to JP 1-02 and ADRP 1-02's definition restricting counterattacks to limited objectives.²⁵

ADRP 3-90, *Offense and Defense* (2012), introduces the counterattack as a “subordinate form” of the attack. Its cousins include the ambush, demonstration, feint, raid, and spoiling attack. As such, the counterattack is subject to common offensive control measures, forms of maneuver, common offensive planning considerations, and transition considerations. In Chapter 4, The Defense, the term *counterattack* appears often as a means for regaining the initiative. Although ADRP 3-90 (2012) is the capstone reference publication for the defense, and the stated purpose of the defense is to “create conditions for the counteroffensive,” the manual repeatedly avoids dealing directly with the considerations for mounting an effective counterattack.²⁶

Varying definitions of the purpose of the counterattack within the same body of doctrine highlight the need for a separate section on the intricacies of the counterattack. In paragraph 4-15 of ADRP 3-90 (2012), “The mobile defense...concentrates on the destruction or defeat of the enemy through a decisive attack by a striking force.”²⁷ This purpose, to “destroy or defeat the attacking force,” contrasts with the definition in ADRP 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (2015), which states the purpose is “regaining ground lost, or cutting off or destroying enemy advance

²⁵ Frank McLynn, *Napoleon, A Biography*, (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 342.

²⁶ Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) ADRP 3-90, *Offense and Defense*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2012), 4-1.

²⁷ ADRP 3-90, 4-15.

units, and with the general objective of denying to the enemy the attainment of the enemy's purpose in attacking.”²⁸ ADRP 1-02's definition calls for a limited counterattack but ADRP 3-90's definition calls for a decisive counterattack. Confusion exists within the ADRP 3-90 (2012) pages, themselves, as they prescribe, “the defending commander then counterattacks the enemy, repeatedly imposing unexpected blows.”²⁹ This contradicts the concept of the decisive counterattack referenced above. A series of repetitive blows does not conjure a decisive counterattack but piecemeal attacks. As currently written, ADRP 3-90 (2012) presents two diametrically opposed courses of action and prescribes each as the preferred.

FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* (2013), provides clarification: “There is a difference between local counterattacks designed to restore the defense and a decisive operation designed to wrest the initiative from the enemy force and then defeat it.”³⁰ FM 3-90-1 (2013) provides the most discussion on the counterattack within its chapter on the Area Defense. Guidance for counterattacks appears throughout the five steps of the area defense, mostly during stages four (maneuver) and a final cumbersome term called “Follow through (counterattack).” Later, in the section on mobile defense, the authors refer to the counterattack force as neither a “reserve” nor a “counterattack force,” but a “striking force.”³¹ The avoidance of directly addressing the counterattack, even while discussing the act, itself, provides continued opportunities for misunderstanding.

FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* (2013) devotes three pages to the counterattack. In the first page, the publication offers no less than twelve purposes and objectives for executing a

²⁸ JP 1-02, 1.

²⁹ ADRP 3-90, 4-39.

³⁰ Field Manual (FM) 3-90.1, *Offense and Defense* (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2013), 7-89.

³¹ FM 3-90.1, 3-149.

counterattack. Although each paragraph provides sound tactical guidance, the section offers commanders few concepts which are not already covered as part of all offensive operations. FM 3-90-1 (2013) states, “the commander conducts the counterattack in the same manner in which any other attack is conducted.” The publication addresses timing by urging commanders to counterattack the enemy force “when it is vulnerable,” but offers no method to detect such a moment.³² The publication addresses location only in terms of the enemy’s flanks, however without accurate intelligence, what appears to be a flank could just as easily be the enemy front. Since it is organized chronologically, (planning, preparing, and executing), the guidance shifts from local counterattack to major counterattack within each paragraph. And while the Army Operating Concept (AOC) implores commanders to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative, FM 3-90-1 (2013) says nothing about what the commander does following the counterattack.³³

FM 100-5, *Operations* (1949), captured lessons learned from WWII and simple guidelines for the counterattack. “The Employment of the Reserve” section provides guidance for commanders in assessing the enemy’s attack; defines two types of counterattacks as “those designed to restore the original position by striking the hostile attack in flank, and those designed to trap and destroy the penetration;” advises a single counterattack commander; and provides broad considerations for artillery, chemical troops, and armored formations. While not perfect,

³² Major William J. Hamilton’s 1991 monograph provides a theoretical review on the right moment to execute the counterattack. William J. Hamilton, “Defensive Culmination: When Does the Tactical Commander Counterattack?” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011).

³³ FM 3-90.1, 3-148 to 3-162. The twelve purposes include regaining lost ground destroying enemy advance units, denying the enemy the attainment of the enemy’s purpose in attacking, to restore the battle position, limited objectives, to defeat enemy forces, to regain control of terrain and facilities after an enemy success, to seize initiative from the enemy through offensive action, to isolate and destroy a designated force, to defeat or destroy an enemy force, to restore the original position, to block an enemy penetration (3-148), retain or seize positions on the shoulders of the enemy’s penetration (3-162).

the 1949 manual provided an independent section focused on an operation which, by its very nature, is perilous every time it is attempted. FM 100-5, *Operations* (1949), was the US Army doctrine at the onset of the Korean War (1950). The following case study takes place in the opening weeks of the Korean War and recounts the historical events in which an operational commander executed a deliberate counterattack.³⁴

Section Two: Task Force Kean's Counterattack, 1950

William Robertson focused on the plight of the 24th Infantry Division (24th ID) in his Leavenworth Paper, *Counterattack on the Nakdong, 1950*. He noted “American counterattack doctrine was sound...had the 24th Division been more familiar with its own counterattack doctrine...it might have been able to defeat the North Korean thrust without all of the assistance it required.” While Robertson focused on the 24th ID counterattack in July, 1950, this research focuses on the role of reconnaissance in the 24th’s sister unit, the 25th Infantry Division (25th ID). The section begins with an introduction to the strategic context, reviews historical events, and concludes with an assessment using the modern lens of the US Army Fundamentals of Reconnaissance.³⁵

Following WWII, the U.S.S.R. and the United States divided Korea into north and south occupation zones. The Soviets invested in a strong North Korea while the United States focused elsewhere, withdrawing all but a small number of military advisors from Korea in 1949. On June 25, 1950, with full Soviet direction and backing, the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) attacked south against an unprepared and underequipped Republic of Korea Army (ROKA). By June 28, the NKPA captured the South Korean capital of Seoul. The action surprised the United

³⁴ Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations – Operations* (Washington DC, 1949), 108-109.

³⁵ William Robertson, *Leavenworth Papers, No. 13: Counterattack on the Nakdong, 1950* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 108-109.

States government and President Harry S. Truman authorized General Douglas MacArthur to commit ground forces to prevent the overthrow of the South Korean government.³⁶

Among four divisions in Japan, MacArthur chose the 24th ID, commanded by Major General William Dean, due to its location in southwest Japan and capacity for rapid deployment. On 1 July, the 24th Infantry deployed TF Smith, a reinforced two-company team (406 riflemen) named after Lieutenant Colonel Charles “Brad” Smith to defend about twenty-five kilometers south of Seoul near Osan. The lethality and pace of the North Korean advance surprised the TF Smith defenders. Their anti-tank weapons failed to destroy the enemy’s T-34 tanks and their defensive position failed to stop the North Korean force. After a few hours of fighting, TF Smith withdrew south. Throughout July of 1950, the 24th ID attempted a series of counterattacks against the advancing NKPA to no avail. Their experience was so chaotic that the soldiers popularized the term “bug-out” for the first time.³⁷

By August, 1950 the remaining ROKA and US Army contingent resided in what came to be known as the Pusan Perimeter. Eighth Army arrived, and with it the 25th ID, in late July. From Washington, DC, the Army G-3 Planning Section devised a 25th ID counterattack directly west toward Chinju between 5-10 August. This southwest part of the perimeter, between the Nakdong River and the sea, was significant because there were no major obstacles separating the North Koreans from the critical port of Pusan. TF Kean, named after the 25th ID Commander, Major

³⁶ There were about 500 US advisors remaining at the time of the attack. Robertson, 5. The circumstances of the surprise appeared in: Roy Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950)* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1992), 61.

³⁷ Roy Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 59. William Dean, General Dean’s Story as told to William L Worden by Major General William L. Dean (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 17-22.

General William B. Kean, to counterattack in order to relieve pressure on other parts of the perimeter.³⁸

In 1950 each US Army division had an organic reconnaissance company. The 25th Reconnaissance Company, led by Captain Charles Torman, was Kean's organic reconnaissance element. Like many US Army forces garrisoned in Japan, the company was not manned to full strength and found little time for reconnaissance training. A July 17, 1950 log report states that 25th ID immediately committed the 25th Reconnaissance Company to the defenses along the Pusan Perimeter.³⁹

Opposing TF Kean was the NKPA 6th Infantry Division (NKPA 6th ID). Composed of mostly veterans of the Chinese civil war, the NKPA 6th ID was among the units which skillfully advanced to the southern end of the peninsula. The unit had fought pitched battles in and around the Chinju region in July. Also, unknown to MG Kean or his staff, the NKPA 6th ID maintained a salient of forces on the rugged slopes of Sobuk-san mountain, within TF Kean's defenses. Even though forward elements traded small arms fire with the enemy forces on Sobuk-san, the information never reached TF Kean's headquarters.⁴⁰

Comprised of two US Army infantry regiments, one US Marine regiment, and various artillery elements, TF Kean with 20,000 men seemed more than adequate to face the NKPA 6th ID estimated at 7,500. TF Kean began the counterattack on August 6 with three brigade-sized elements. The division attacked along two main axes with 35th Infantry Regiment to the north

³⁸ Arrival timelines appear in T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History – Fiftieth Anniversary Edition* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books Inc., 2001), 127. Appleman, 266; and Uzal Ent, *Fighting on the Brink: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter*, (Nashville: Turner Publishing Company, 1998), 134, recount the inclusion of 2nd ID in the plan.

³⁹ 25th Infantry Division Association Editorial Review, *Twenty-Fifth Infantry Division, Tropic Lightning, Korea 1950-1954* (Paducah: Turner Publishing Company, 2002), 182.

⁴⁰ Appleman, 61.

and 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in the center. The 5th Marine Regiment, with marine aviation assets in direct support, advanced along the coast in the south. Each of the three axes of advance converged on the town of Chinju.⁴¹

After 10 days of fierce fighting, marked by capturing, losing, and recapturing key hills, the division returned to its initial defensive positions. The battle would come to be known as the Battel of the Bloody Gulch. Without the situational awareness of the enemy force, the task force inadvertently bypassed the lethal enemy salient on Sobak-san Mountain. As TF Kean's lead elements attacked west, NKPA forces descended from Sobuk-san and destroyed the 555th Field Artillery Battalion (FAB) and a battery of 90th FAB as they waited to travel west. Their howitzers were destroyed and field artillerymen who survived the attack were later massacred by the North Koreans. On August 16, the Eighth Army Commander, General Walton W. Walker, dissolved the task force and apportioned the units to other areas along the perimeter. The loss of the 555th FAB as a combat effective artillery battalion and the destruction of A Battery, 90th FAB negated any combat successes of the effort.⁴²

The Reconnaissance Company, fighting as regular infantry, failed to provide early warning. On August 6, 1950, the same day as TF Kean's counterattack, the NKPA 6th ID began its own attack on the Pusan Perimeter. FM 100-5, *Operations* (1949), advises commanders to consider the enemy intentions carefully before launching the counterattack. Had TF Kean's reconnaissance company screened forward of the main body, it could have detected the NKPA 6th ID lead elements as they advanced directly toward the apex of lead brigade. In *On War*, Clausewitz advised defenders to wait and absorb the blow of the initial attacks until the defender's strength is at its zenith relative to the attacker. To ascertain when this level of relative

⁴¹ Ent, 136.

⁴² Ent, 161 and Appleman, 266-288.

strength is optimum for the counterattack, the commander depends upon accurate intelligence collected by his reconnaissance forces.⁴³

In 1954, General James Gavin, the first commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, wrote a scathing report on the lack of reconnaissance in the Korean War. “The situation begged for cavalry, but we lacked the contemporary kind of cavalry to do the job.” Gavin argued that cavalry forces were too wedded to the roads due to their heavy tank force structure and called for what would later become known as airmobile cavalry in the Vietnam War. Gavin’s observations coincide with the shortcomings observed in this review. During TF Kean’s counterattack, the operational commander treated his division reconnaissance company as another maneuver force, yielding any advantage that tactical reconnaissance forces could provide. TF Kean’s experience demonstrates the need for tactical reconnaissance forces to provide early warning and gain and maintain contact with enemy forces ahead of the main body.⁴⁴

TF Kean failed to observe the first Fundamental of Reconnaissance: ensure continuous reconnaissance. FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security* (2015), explains that reconnaissance units perform continuous reconnaissance to “identify and seize key terrain, confirm or deny enemy composition, disposition, strength, and courses of action.” Instead, TF Kean advanced without reconnaissance forces capable of providing intelligence on enemy positions. An account of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines summarized the situation. “They ran head-on into the North Koreans who had come around to the front of the spur during the night.”⁴⁵ TF Kean observed the second fundamental, never keep reconnaissance assets in the reserve, but failed to employ the

⁴³ Clausewitz, 383.

⁴⁴ Major General James Gavin, “Cavalry, And I Don’t Mean Horses,” *Harper’s Magazine*, April, 1954, 54.

⁴⁵ Appleman, 272.

scouts as information collectors. With reconnaissance employed as infantry, MG Kean failed to observe the third fundamental, orient reconnaissance on the reconnaissance objective. The objective was enemy-focused but Kean did not task his reconnaissance forces to identify the 6th NPKA Division either ahead of 35th Infantry or on the hills of Sobuk-san. The fourth fundamental, report timely and accurately, did not occur. The fifth fundamental, retain freedom of maneuver, was not observed but the casualty records suggest that the 25th Reconnaissance Company was not decisively engaged. Casualty records show that the 25th Reconnaissance Company only sustained two casualties during the period of TF Kean's counterattack. TF Kean neglected the sixth fundamental, gain and maintain contact with the threat. The routine ability of the enemy to appear at unexpected locations at unanticipated strengths indicates poor basic operational reconnaissance and security discipline throughout the task force. Finally, TF Kean failed to observe the seventh fundamental, to develop the situation rapidly. Without committed reconnaissance forces to develop the situation, TF Kean moved forward blindly with his infantry brigades.⁴⁶ Table 1, below, provides an overview.

US 25th Infantry Division (TF Kean) 1950 Korean War			
	Fundamental of Reconnaissance	Observed	Not Observed
1	Ensure Continuous Reconnaissance		X
2	Do Not Keep Reconnaissance Forces in the Reserve	X	
3	Orient on the Reconnaissance Objective		X
4	Report All Information Rapidly and Accurately		X
5	Retain Freedom of Maneuver		X
6	Gain and Maintain Contact with the Threat		X
7	Develop the Situation Rapidly		X

Table 1: Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance in TF Kean's Counterattack

⁴⁶ Doctrinal quotations appear in *FM 3-98, Reconnaissance and Security* (2015), 5-2 through 5-8.

The research found that the experience of TF Kean might have been representative of the US Army during this period of the Korean War. An inspection of the indexes of three of the most popular books on the Korean War resulted in zero references to reconnaissance forces.⁴⁷ By the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the Israeli Army assigned a battalion-sized reconnaissance element per division and witnessed success. The next case study occurs six years later as Israel sustained a debilitating surprise attack. The study is relevant as it highlights the ability of tactical reconnaissance forces to collect information in an austere environment and provide accurate information on the post-attack operational environment. In this study, the reconnaissance force identified one of the best battlefield opportunities in history.⁴⁸

Section Three: Sharon's Counterattack, 1973

Clausewitz asserted that war is an instrument of policy. “The conduct of war...is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen.”⁴⁹ Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, proved this maxim through his execution of a limited war to achieve what other forms of policy could not. After the Israelis dealt their Arab neighbors an embarrassing defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the Israeli leadership refused to return the occupied territories. Sadat conspired with Syria, who also lost territory in the 1967 War, to compel the Israelis to negotiate the return of the Golan Plateau and the Sinai Peninsula. To do so, the Arab attack needed to

⁴⁷ This research searched the indexes of the following three authorities on the Korean War, *The Coldest War; This Kind of War; South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, for the following terms: “recon,” “scout,” “cavalry,” or “reconnaissance.” None of them contained either of the four words. A digital search resulted in more hits, but each led to passages about “commander’s reconnaissance,” a different type of mission. “Cavalry” appeared only as a unit descriptor for 1st Cavalry Division and other units of cavalry heraldry.

⁴⁸ Colonel Harry Summers, *Korean War Almanac* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 78.

⁴⁹ Clausewitz, 605-610.

“inflict the highest losses possible on the enemy in men, arms, and equipment.”⁵⁰ Sadat also sought to increase the prestige of Egypt and himself by leading an Arab coalition against Israel. Arab strategy called for limited offensives to secure terrain within the occupied territories to enable the Arabs to exploit wartime gains in international negotiations.

At 2pm on October 6, 1973, the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Plateau.⁵¹ The Egyptians defeated the local defenders, bypassed Israeli strongholds, and occupied positions just three miles on the east side of the Suez Canal. Historian John J. McGrath postulated that the Egyptian crossing of the Suez was possibly the “most successful river-crossing operation in military history.”⁵²

Nothing in Israeli doctrine or strategy prepared them for an attack of this magnitude. The shock of the attack took on a psychological as well as physical toll. One senior officer described the moment as, “the most shattering experience in the history of Israel.” The success of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was a benchmark that established an internal narrative of battlefield superiority for the IDF versus their Arab neighbors. In addition, Israelis generally had a poor view of Arab capabilities as strategists and believed neither Egypt nor Syria capable of coordinating a major offensive.⁵³

Conditioned to seize the initiative and emboldened by the success of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, on October 8, 1973 two IDF divisions mounted a hasty counterattack to restore

⁵⁰ Anwar al-Sadat, *al-Baith ‘an al-dhat: qissat hayati* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Misri al-Hadith, 1985), 444.

⁵¹ Mohamed Abdel Gahni El-Gamasy, *The October War* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 138.

⁵² John J. McGrath, “Sinai, 1973: Israeli Maneuver Warfare Organization and the Battle of the Chinese Farm” (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press: 2005), 67.

⁵³ Avraham Tamir, *A Soldier in Search of Peace*, Joan Comay, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 190.

control of the Suez Canal and rescue the trapped defenders. 143rd Armored Division (143rd AD) under Major General Ariel Sharon and the 162nd Armored Division (162nd AD) under Major General Avraham Adan launched the initial counterattack in the Battle of El Firdan. The result was horrific. Soviet-supplied surface-to-air missiles (SAMS) destroyed the first sorties of the Israeli Air Force, denying air interdiction as well as air reconnaissance. Moreover, maneuver units failed to lead with reconnaissance forces forward of their main bodies. The result was a series of piecemeal attacks on unknown enemy dispositions. Knowing the offensive psychology of the Israelis, the Egyptians lured the IDF tanks into their *Sagger* anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) engagement areas along avenues of approach to the Israeli strongpoints. The initial IDF counterattack rapidly lost seventy veteran tank crews on the first day and another forty-nine tanks on the next with nothing to show for it.⁵⁴

The failed counterattacks at El Firdan further shattered pre-existing mindsets and led to an operational pause by the Israelis. During the respite, Lieutenant General Haim Bar Lev came out of retirement to lead the IDF response and quickly decided to end the piecemeal counterattacks. Bar Lev adjusted the defensive perimeter, reorganized forces, and adjusted tactics to survive the lethal Egyptian anti-armor capabilities. The pause allowed the Israelis to integrate a mass of reserve units arriving to the Sinai, one of which was the 87th Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (87th ARB).⁵⁵

Equipped with twenty-four M60A1 Tanks, thirty-six M113s, and about twenty jeeps, the 87th ARB was among the newest formed reserve battalions in the Israeli Army. Formed in May of 1973, the battalion underwent four weeks of training at Israel's army training sites and then

⁵⁴ Avraham Adan, *On the Banks of the Suez: An Israeli General's Personal Account of the Yom Kippur War* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1980), 117; John McGrath, "Sinai, 1973," 74; El-Gamasy, 245.

⁵⁵ McGrath, "Sinai, 1973," 68.

participated in divisional exercises in August. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Carmeli, was a veteran of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The battalion rushed from Israel to the Sinai frontier, preferring to drive the tanks there rather than wait for heavy equipment trucking to transport them. The 87th ARB arrived near the northeastern corner of the Great Bitter Lake in the early morning hours of October 7, 1973 with the rest of the 143th AD. On October 8th, while executing a covering role for the division, artillery landed near Lieutenant Colonel Carmeli's tank and killed him instantly. Later that night, Major Yoav Brom, a brigade staff officer, assumed command of the unit.⁵⁶

Yoav Brom was exactly the leader the Israeli Army sought to develop. Israeli Army doctrine, even before 1967, introduced a command and control philosophy called "operational control." Adopted from Moltke's system of *Weisungen* (directives), higher commands avoided detailed orders and only interfered to change a major axis of advance or prevent unacceptable risk. Operational control allowed subordinate commanders maximum independence. This command system, similar to the US Army's current philosophy of Mission Command, required "highly intelligent junior commanders, mutual trust and shared understanding." Social prestige and culture blessed the IDF with highly intelligent and talented officers. The challenge in October of 1973 was how to create a shared understanding out of the chaos of the Arab attacks.⁵⁷

On October 9, 1973, Sharon directed the 87th ARB to advance forward and report on the dispositions of the Egyptian forces. Brom's two companies spent hours observing the Egyptian positions north of the Great Bitter Lake. While observing, however, they noticed a curious lack of activity between the two Egyptian armies. The Egyptian Second Army was clearly dug-in and

⁵⁶ McGrath, *Scouts Out!* (Fort Leavenworth: CSI Press, 2008), 130.

⁵⁷ Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 228.

alert, as evidenced by Egyptian direct fire upon any IDF movement in that sector. Brom's company commanders, however, could not detect any reaction from the Egyptian Third Army, which was templated on the north shore of the Great Bitter Lake. Major Brom hypothesized that there was a seam between the two Egyptian forces.

To confirm or deny his hypothesis, Major Brom asked permission to advance further west.

We moved towards the canal, keeping up a constant shooting match with the Egyptian positions to our north. This way we pinpointed their southernmost positions. We advanced over dunes to the Great Bitter Lake without any serious difficulty. It was by this route that we, a week later, guided the forces that established our bridgehead across the canal.⁵⁸

In this manner, the 87th ARB balanced the responsibility for reconnaissance forces to gain and maintain contact with the enemy while simultaneously maintaining their freedom of maneuver.

After reaching the canal, Major Brom's scouts concealed their tanks in an abandoned Israeli strongpoint. General Adan, to the north, recalled in his memoirs, "the unit discovered the open seam between the Egyptian Second and Third Armies."⁵⁹ With this information, Sharon's division planners designed a counterattack to exploit the gap and envelop the Egyptian line. The next day MG Sharon argued for an immediate counterattack to exploit the seam. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and the IDF decided to launch the counterattack once sufficient canal-crossing resources were on hand for exploitation. While deliberate planning began, MG Sharon recalled the scouts from the canal.⁶⁰

On October 15, 1973, in a literal interpretation of "reconnaissance pull," Major Brom led the lead elements of Sharon's division along the same path that he and his scouts had discovered

⁵⁸ Zeev Schiff, *October Earthquake: Yom Kippur 1973* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 158.

⁵⁹ Adan, 191.

⁶⁰ McGrath, *Sinai, 1973*, 74.

six days prior. The lead brigade encountered no opposition and reached the Suez at dark. Later elements then made contact with surprised Egyptians and battle ensued. In the early morning hours of October 16, Israeli paratroopers bypassed the firefight and linked up with Brom's scouts at the crossing site. They unpacked their inflatable rafts and began crossing the Suez into Egypt. By daylight, 750 infantrymen were on the west bank along with ten tanks ferried by Gilowa rafts.⁶¹

The Israeli breakthrough wrested the initiative from the Egyptian attackers. At the time of the UN ceasefire on October 24, 1973, Israeli forces west of the canal threatened the Egyptian flank. President Sadat of Egypt succeeded in his limited aims of bringing Israel to the negotiating table - war as an extension of policy succeeded in what other initiatives could not - but at great risk. Without the intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Israeli counterattack might have pushed even deeper into Egyptian territory.

The actions of this tactical reconnaissance battalion directly enabled the division's operational counterattack and exemplified several Fundamentals of Reconnaissance as written in FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations* (2015). First, the division employed the battalion in a manner which allowed for continuous reconnaissance. By doing so, the 87th ARB discovered the gap in the Egyptian lines. Second, reconnaissance assets were not kept in the reserve. Sharon directly tasked the 87th ARB for area and route reconnaissance. Third, the

⁶¹ "Reconnaissance Pull" is defined in FM 3-98 as a Reconnaissance Technique in section 5-11: "Reconnaissance pull is used when commanders are uncertain of the composition and disposition of enemy forces in their areas of operation, information concerning terrain is vague, and time is limited...As they gain an understanding of enemy weaknesses, they then 'pull' the main body to positions of tactical advantage." Gilowa rafts were wheeled ferry vehicles capable of transporting two tanks across the canal at a time. Egyptian artillery destroyed the initial pontoon bridge. Despite heavy damage by shrapnel, the rafts succeeded in transporting over 120 tanks across the canal over two days. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2007), 417-418.

battalion oriented on the reconnaissance objective. In this case, the objective was enemy focused, the Egyptian Second and Third Armies, and prompted the 87th ARB to investigate further when lead elements failed to gain contact with the Egyptian Third Army. Fourth, the battalion reported all information rapidly and accurately. The 87th ARB allowed Sharon's division staff to make timely recommendations based on the accurate conditions on the ground. The 87th ARB observed the fifth fundamental, "retain freedom of maneuver," as they traded directed fire with the Egyptian Second Army without becoming decisively engaged. The 87th ARB failed to observe the sixth fundamental, "gain and maintain threat contact." Even though Major persistently advanced in search of the Egyptian Third Army, MG Sharon deliberately decided to extract the 87th ARB scouts from the area in order to prevent detection. This lapse of physical presence retained the element of surprise but left Egyptian forces unobserved. During the lapse in threat contact, the enemy repositioned forces who later harassed Israeli forces as they moved to the crossing site. MG Sharon observed the last fundamental of reconnaissance, "develop the situation rapidly." Once the 87th ARB identified the gap in enemy forces and the route to the crossing site, his staff immediately began planning for a counterattack to gain and exploit the initiative.⁶² Table 2, below, provides an overview.

Israeli 143rd Armored Division (MG Sharon) 1973 Arab Israeli War			
	Fundamental of Reconnaissance	Observed	Not Observed
1	Ensure Continuous Reconnaissance	X	
2	Do Not Keep Reconnaissance Forces in the Reserve	X	
3	Orient on the Reconnaissance Objective	X	
4	Report All Information Rapidly and Accurately	X	
5	Retain Freedom of Maneuver	X	
6	Gain and Maintain Contact with the Threat		X
7	Develop the Situation Rapidly	X	

⁶² Doctrinal quotations appear in FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security* (2015), 5-2 through 5-8.

Table 2: Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance in MG Sharon's Counterattack

Section Four: Synthesis and Recommendations

MG Kean observed one of seven Fundamental of Reconnaissance while MG Sharon demonstrated six of the seven Fundamentals of Reconnaissance. The checklist is inconclusive, by itself, but the number of reconnaissance fundamentals observed by the successful counterattack gives credence to the value and timelessness the modern doctrine. Both divisions faced a cunning enemy with a record of success. MG Kean's reconnaissance company, used as infantrymen, failed to provide information on the operational environment that his headquarters required. Twenty-three years later, MG Sharon's reconnaissance battalion proactively discovered a vulnerable point in the enemy's defenses. The observation of modern reconnaissance fundamentals, combined with a leadership philosophy that rewarded subordinate initiative, contributed to the success of MG Sharon's counterattack.

The following table, Table 3, compares the observations from each counterattack.

Comparison: 25th IN DIV (Kean) and 143rd AR DIV (Sharon)			
	Fundamental of Reconnaissance	MG Kean US, 1950	MG Sharon Israel, 1973
1	Ensure Continuous Reconnaissance		X
2	Do Not Keep Reconnaissance Forces in the Reserve	X	X
3	Orient on the Reconnaissance Objective		X
4	Report All Information Rapidly and Accurately		X
5	Retain Freedom of Maneuver		X
6	Gain and Maintain Contact with the Threat		
7	Develop the Situation Rapidly		X

Table 3: Comparison of Observed Fundamentals of Reconnaissance

Understanding the operational environment, enhanced by the reconnaissance force, enables the decision to transition to the offense. When conditions allow for information dominance, commanders optimize all resources to allow for cognitive dominance. When the adversary lacks the ability or fails to degrade US Army's superior technological advantages, the

tactical ground reconnaissance commander, in coordination with the senior intelligence officer, proactively optimizes information collection. The principles of cueing and redundancy, both of which appear in more detail in Chapter 1 of FM 3-55, *Information Collection*, provide guidelines for maximizing reconnaissance assets.⁶³

This analysis does not prove that good reconnaissance is a direct cause of successful counterattacks. Rather, the research highlights how operational commanders who employ (and allow their reconnaissance subordinates to employ) the Fundamentals of Reconnaissance achieve advantages in information collection which could enhance the likelihood of success. Meanwhile, operational commanders must also integrate other warfighting functions and branches. Engineers must plan for and execute timely breaches of enemy obstacles. Signal professionals support the counterattack through planning for redundant communication throughout the course of the defense. Aviation units, when available, provide direct fire lethality as well as sustainment opportunities. All of these warfighting functions and branches require integration and synchronization to maximize effectiveness. To do so, the US Army needs to provide a common framework for the counterattack.

Recommendations

Insights into counterattacks exist in history, theory, and US Army doctrine, however, no doctrinal publication organizes them in a method conducive to allow a smooth cognitive recall. A doctrinal review of the counterattack should review the definition of the counterattack, overlay the roles of warfighting functions along the stages of the defense, and identify distinct forms of counterattacks. Each of these recommendations is a product of the historical, doctrinal, and theoretical research conducted for the purposes of this analysis.

⁶³ Field Manual (FM) 3-55, *Information Collection* (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 2012), 1-63.

First, a future publication of ADRP 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols*, should simplify the definition of the counterattack. A possible definition is “Counterattack – the transition from defense to offense by part or all of a defending force against an enemy attacking force.” This definition is much shorter than the US Army definition and avoids elaboration which unnecessarily limits the counterattack. An additional section in the next release of ADRP 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense*, should elaborate on the diverse range of purposes of the counterattack, guidance based on historical events, and considerations on whether to launch the counterattack. The “Employment of the Reserve” section of the 1949 version of FM 100-5, *Operations*, provides many of these topics but not in a cohesive organization. In the modern body of US Army doctrine, this guidance should appear in each warfighting function’s applicable field manuals.

Second, a future publication of FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*, should overlay the roles of reconnaissance upon the five stages of the defense. FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* (2012), provides five steps of the area defense. The dual nature of reconnaissance forces, their responsibility to reconnoiter at some times and provide security at others, provides an opportunity for illustration. This research clarified a general cycle of reconnaissance roles during the stages of the defense. The role of reconnaissance forces fluctuates from detecting opportunities through additional information (reconnaissance) and providing early warning and protecting the main body during the execution of the counterattack (security). Figure 1, below, displays a visualization of the transition between reconnaissance and security roles during the steps of the area defense.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense*, 7-61.

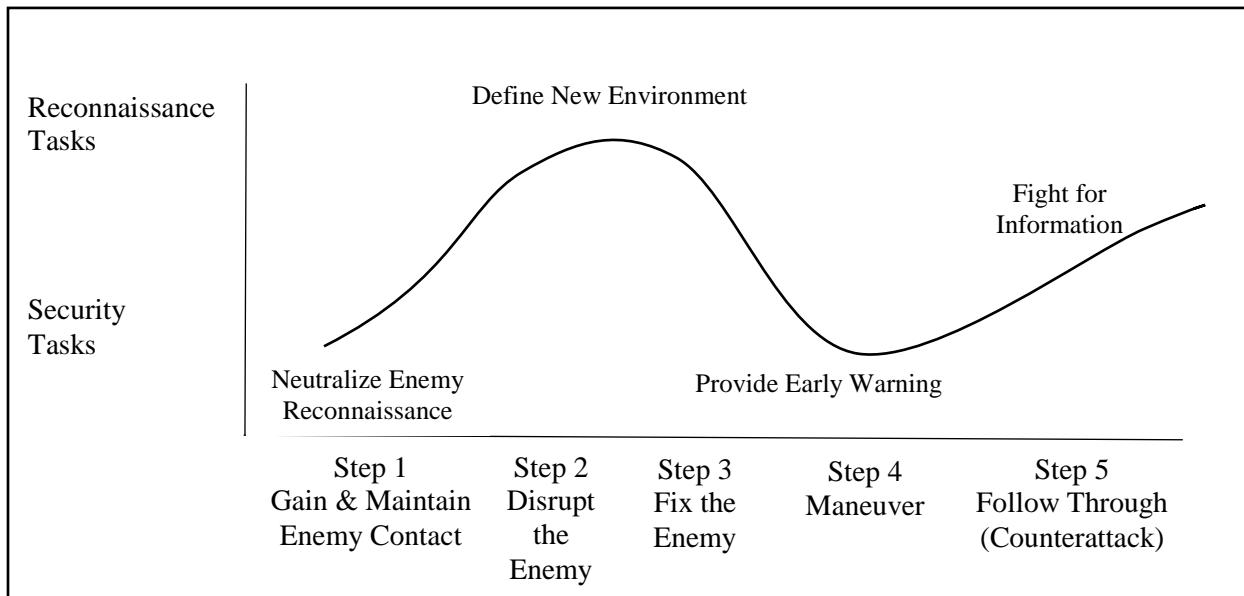


Figure 1: Reconnaissance and security roles during the five stages of the defense

Source: Figure 1 drawn by the author using the Steps of the Defense from FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense*, 7-61.

A review of historical counterattacks and the comments of major military theorists yielded the following insights on the role of ground reconnaissance forces during each of the five stages of the defense. Step one, “gain and maintain contact with the enemy,” is when reconnaissance forces detect the enemy’s composition and disposition to anticipate future actions. Reconnaissance forces use advanced optics and patrols to detect enemy reconnaissance elements. The reconnaissance commander relays this information to the maneuver commanders to enhance the disruptive effects of their limited counterattacks and assists the operational intelligence section in consolidating the reports from enemy contact to ascertain the operational environment. During this step, the focus is on neutralizing enemy reconnaissance and protecting the main body so security roles are high and reconnaissance roles are lower.

Step two, “disrupt the enemy,” is when the operational commander uses indirect fires, aviation assets, and obstacles to reduce the enemy’s combat power and stymie the enemy’s momentum. Reconnaissance forces employ fires and destroy enemy elements within their

capability. During this step, timely and accurate reports define the new operational environment.

Therefore, reconnaissance roles are higher relative to security roles.

Step three, “fix the enemy,” constrains the enemy from his most dangerous courses of action. Obstacle planning and emplacement fix, turn, or block the enemy into preplanned defenses. Reconnaissance forces, often tasked to overwatch obstacles, employ indirect fires upon the attackers as they attempt to bypass or breach prepared obstacles. Reconnaissance forces confirm or deny assumptions. During step three, security roles begin to take precedence over reconnaissance roles.

During step four, “Maneuver,” reconnaissance forces protect the striking force from detection and engagement. On the other front of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, on the Golan Heights, one counterattack was tragic.

Captain Levine began his movement immediately and in the interest of speed he failed to employ scouts or flank protection. The result was one of the worst disasters ever inflicted upon Israel’s armored corps...Captain Levine was leading the company and his tank was the first to be destroyed. The company never regained control of the situation and all ten Centurions were destroyed in less than two minutes.⁶⁵

The lack of reconnaissance forces prevented early warning and situational awareness. During step four (maneuver), missions require security roles more often than reconnaissance roles because protection of the striking force is tantamount.

Step five is the “follow through (counterattack).” The most mobile reconnaissance elements accompany the striking force through the point of penetration. At times, as in the case of the 87th ARB in the Yom Kippur War, the reconnaissance force both discovers and pulls the striking force through the axis of advance. Reconnaissance forces identify post-counterattack reconnaissance objectives which provide early warning to the main body and identify opportunities for

⁶⁵ Oakland McCulloch, MMAS Thesis, “The Decisiveness of Israeli Small-Unit Leadership on the Golan Heights in the 1973 Yom Kippur War,” (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Government Printing Office, 2003)

exploitation. Units must plan for success. Moltke notes, “It is the cavalry’s duty, after a successful battle, to take up pursuit immediately, without further orders, and to maintain contact with the fleeing enemy.”⁶⁶ After the striking force breaks through, reconnaissance forces must ascertain the positions and dispositions of threat forces beyond the initial counterattack objectives. The consequences of neglect are onerous. During this final step, reconnaissance roles rise relative to security roles.

The third and final recommendation is to identify three forms of counterattacks. As described earlier, the terms *local* and *major* are insufficient. More descriptive identification allows warfighting functions to identify their responsibilities within each of the three forms. The research suggests that three distinct forms of the counterattack exist: hasty, deliberate, and a new term, baited.⁶⁷

The hasty counterattack resembles what FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* (2012), describes as a *local* counterattack. A defender chooses to execute a hasty counterattack when the defender lacks time or terrain favorable to the defense. In this situation, Clausewitz’s maxim that the defense allows greater attrition and intelligence of the enemy does not necessarily apply. Reconnaissance forces in the hasty counterattack need, foremost, to retain freedom of maneuver. When the commander lacks the ability to disrupt enemy forces through the static defense, offensive action in the form of a hasty counterattack could be the solution. During the hasty counterattack, the operational commander assigns follow-on reconnaissance objectives for the reconnaissance force. The reconnaissance element must maneuver ahead or nearby the main body to prevent surprise and identify fleeting opportunities for the commander to exploit. The hasty counterattack is less lethal than a deliberate or baited counterattack because of the lack of pre-

⁶⁶ Moltke, 163.

⁶⁷ FM 3-90-1 (2012), 3-149.

planned indirect fire targets, unrehearsed avenues of approach, and time to prepare. Despite its relative lack of lethality, under many circumstances, the hasty counterattack is an appropriate option for the commander.⁶⁸

The deliberate counterattack resembles what FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense* (2012), describes as a *major* counterattack although in other sections appears as a *decisive* counterattack.⁶⁹ The deliberate counterattack represents Clausewitz's ideal defense: the defender destroys lead enemy elements from prepared positions and, once the attacker's effort has culminated or his combat power has sufficiently dropped relative to the defender, the defender commits the striking force to defeat the enemy. The reconnaissance force supporting this type of counterattack selects the best possible ground for the defense, sets in observation points with advanced optics to employ fires, and attaches mobile reconnaissance forces with the striking force to follow the lead maneuver force. Mobile reconnaissance continues along diverse avenues of approach in order to confirm or deny their suitability for follow on attacks. The deliberate counterattack allows greater lethality through pre-planned fires, greater synchronization, and mutual support.

This research identified a third type of counterattack, observed in historical events but not in doctrine. A baited counterattack is one in which the defender entices the attacker into a salient or inopportune position and then commits a striking force to destroy the attackers. This type of counterattack exploits the momentum of the attacker into a preplanned area, ideal for the striking force. FM 100-5, *Operations* (1949), hints at it in an introductory paragraph on The Defensive: "He may take up a position and invite attack as part of a deliberate plan to win the battle by a

⁶⁸ FM 3-90-1, 3-152.

⁶⁹ FM 3-90-1, 3-150 states "the two levels of counterattacks are major and local counterattacks" however the previous paragraph, 3-149, refers to a "decisive counterattack."

counteroffensive.”⁷⁰ Napoleon used this method at Austerlitz in 1805 when, feigning weakness, the French forces defended until the Allies were enticed to overstretch their right flank onto the deceptively weak French left. Napoleon’s deception lured the Allies into a salient so his forces could counterattack a vulnerable flank.⁷¹

Another example of a baited counterattack occurred at the American Revolutionary War Battle of Cowpens in 1781. At Cowpens, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan led two distinct forces: Continental regulars and militiamen. The militiamen had a reputation of fleeing prematurely in battle. To exploit this perception, Morgan ordered his militia soldiers to fire only two volleys and then withdraw. When this occurred in battle, the British Colonel Banastre Tarleton took this as a sign of panic and pursued the militiamen. Unbeknownst to the British, Morgan’s finest Continental soldiers awaited them with disciplined musket fire at close range. Meanwhile, as planned, the militiamen returned and mounted a decisive bayonet charge upon the flank of the surprised British. The reconnaissance force supporting this type of counterattack establishes observation points to gain and maintain contact with the attacking enemy and integrates redundant observation over the trigger line for the commitment of the striking force. This form of the counterattack provides maximum lethality as the operation deliberately lures the adversary into pre-planned direct, indirect, and joint fires.⁷²

Figure 2, below, presents the relationship between lethality among the three counterattack methods described.

⁷⁰ Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (1949), 120.

⁷¹ David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966), 410-411. Frank McLynn, *Napoleon, A Biography*, (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 342.

⁷² Lawrence Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 142.

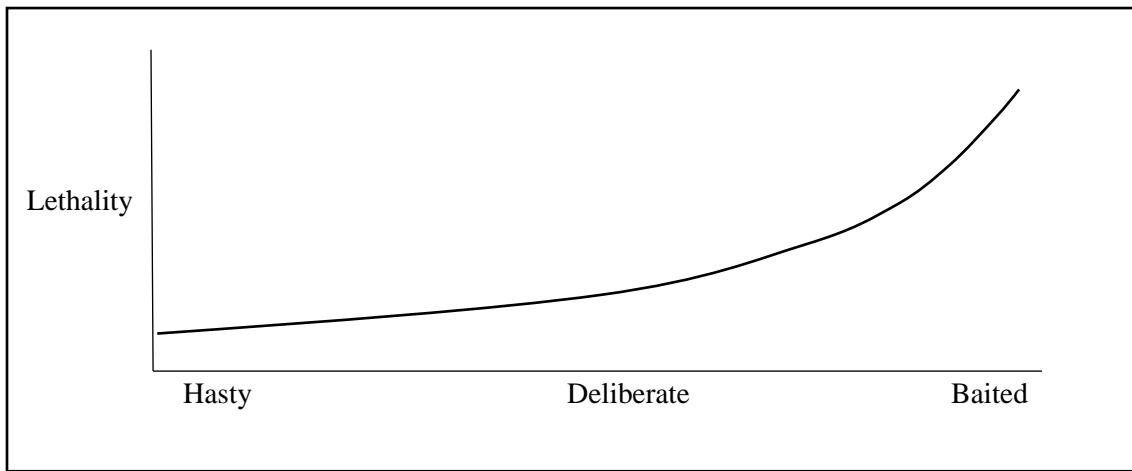


Figure 2: Counterattack Spectrum

Source: Figure 2 drawn by the author.

In each of the three forms of the counterattack, reconnaissance forces integrate with the striking force. Scouts relay known enemy positions, which remain under visual contact, and describe all of the patterns of life, unique signatures, and habits observed of the enemy. Mobile reconnaissance forces move forward of the defenses, avoiding decisive engagement, and identify routes for the striking force. They discover gaps and bypasses and identify crossing points. The Israeli 87th Reconnaissance Squadron exemplified this role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Following the Egyptian surprise attack, they provided opportunities for the operational commander when they discovered a functional enemy-emplaced bridge site and a weak point in the Egyptian line. They subsequently led the mechanized force along reconnoitered routes to enable operational surprise in the Israeli counterattack.

Conclusion

Returning to the fictional MG Morris in the introduction, the enemy attack made it difficult for him and his staff to know even the positions of his own forces. His military education prepared him for integrating and synchronizing the vast capabilities of US joint forces, but prepared him little for information management at the speed of courier. Fortunately, he had

trained his force, relentlessly, on operations without digital enablers. A philosophy of mission command also allowed his junior leaders to take prudent risks within a culture of mutual trust. Each of his maneuver commanders transitioned from his primary to alternate and contingency communication networks after the communications “blackout” to arrange their forces in the defense. Tactical staffs had supplies on hand for analog planning and soon were able to establish a general awareness of the situation.

MG Morris soon heard from his lead brigade commander. Due to a culture of disciplined initiative, one of the reconnaissance squadrons arrayed his forces in concealed forward positions within visual contact of the enemy. Their reports, sent by courier, revealed enemy forces within the division’s defense and relayed the information to the division artillery for suppression and to an attached armored force for engagement. The scouts’ initiative prevented the disastrous rear-guard attacks that TF Kean sustained in 1950. Another proactive squadron sent scouts forward undetected to discover a gap in the enemy’s line. As Major Brom’s scouts accomplished in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, they discovered a viable axis of approach for a counterattack force. A third squadron, advancing in another direction, discovered that bridges across a major waterway had been destroyed by the US Air Force, temporarily cutting off lead enemy forces from their main body. Additional reports allowed an understanding of the post-attack operational environment. Through tactics honed by austere training and initiative sanctioned by Mission Command principles, tactical reconnaissance forces influenced the timing, locations, and purpose of the operational counterattack.

This fictional situation is within realm of realism. The 2015 Russian National Security Strategy included this passage: “The buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)...the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its

military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.”⁷³ Meanwhile, NATO and US Army Europe continue to increase the size and scope of multinational exercises in eastern European states. In addition, the 2015 US National Military Strategy noted, “Attacks on our communications and sensing systems could occur with little to no warning, impacting our ability to assess, coordinate, communicate, and respond.” A surprise attack on forward US units would be reckless and would garner international retribution, however, history shows that reckless attacks are part of the human experience.⁷⁴

A focus on the counterattack admits a degree of vulnerability and prevents operational hubris. Whether the subject is the US forces in the Korean War or the Israelis in the Yom Kippur War, great militaries suffered due to the cleverness and persistence of their enemy. The Tet Offensive of 1968 is the last time US Army commanders faced a conventional attack that surprised and disoriented US Army forces. In 2015, after twelve years of counterinsurgency experience, no determined attacker has stripped a US force from its technological enablers. And none since the Korean War has forced an operational force into an involuntary defense. To prepare for this uncommon yet catastrophic event, training, doctrine, and professional education must compensate for the dearth of personal experience.

If military professionals never study counterattacks, their ability to execute one in the fog and friction of warfare will be limited. Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, differentiated between what mental frameworks are best for conditions of urgency

⁷³ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Unpacking Russia’s New National Security Strategy*, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://csis.org/publication/unpacking-russias-new-national-security-strategy>.

⁷⁴ US Department of Defense. The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: The United States Military’s Contribution to National Security. Headquarters, Department of Defense, Washington DC, June, 2015, 3.

(thinking fast) versus those which require deliberation (thinking slow). The reaction to a violent surprise attack calls for thinking fast. Kahneman would argue that, in such a situation, commanders are susceptible to the concept of availability bias. Availability biases are “shortcuts” the brain subconsciously makes based on the information most readily recalled from memory. To mitigate this cognitive phenomenon, military professionals must build a readily accessible memory through study and forethought.⁷⁵

Although counterinsurgency operations are complex problems, US Army leaders from 2001 to 2014 executed them from positions of technological, equipment, and firepower advantage. Fighting from a position of relative disadvantage is foreign to our generation of officers and leaders. Without personal experience, leaders require doctrine and training. Leaders possess a cognitive advantage when they exploit opportunities to outwit and frustrate enemy attackers.

Clausewitz, in a chapter called “Critical Analysis,” introduced the concept of “tyranny of fashion.” He noted that Napoleon ended his siege of Mantua in 1796 because an army of 50,000 Austrians was coming to relieve the town. Clausewitz noted, however, that Napoleon did not think to defend his siege lines (a tactic known as resisting a relieving army behind lines of circumvallation). Clausewitz noted, “And yet in the days of Louis XIV it had so often been successfully employed that one can call it a whim of fashion that a hundred years later it never occurred to anyone *at least to weigh* its merits.”⁷⁶ Clausewitz’s reasoning compliments Kahneman’s: when certain practices are not in fashion, commanders unnecessarily restrict their creativity to those practices which are. By studying the defense and its culmination, the counterattack, leaders increase their capacity to act creatively and effectively against a

⁷⁵ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 1-50.

⁷⁶ Clausewitz, 162. Italics appear as such in Paret and Howard’s translation.

determined enemy. Through studying the examples of counterattacks waged in the 1950 Korean War in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, this analysis highlighted the role that modern reconnaissance forces play in setting conditions for the counterattack. Through a review of the theory and doctrine available, it is clear that the current US Army body of doctrine has value but lacks a single source for guidance on counterattacks.⁷⁷

The US Army Combat Training Centers (CTCs) already recognize the modern operational environment and integrate degraded cyber and electronic warfare into the training scenarios. Going further, the broader scenario should replicate a successful enemy attack which leaves the brigade command in a communications “blackout” as the commander and staff balance their time between defending against a persistent enemy and planning for a decisive counterattack. Scenario writers at the CTCs already create a crucible experience for leaders and soldiers, alike. The centers integrate additional cyber and electronic warfare variables in each rotation.⁷⁸

The 2014 Army Operating Concept noted, “Army forces will have to support joint operations through reconnaissance, offensive operations or raids to destroy land-based enemy space and cyberspace capabilities.” Implied is a responsibility for defending units to possess the knowledge and maturity to be able to transition from the defense to the offense. The US Army has all of the tools necessary to bolster its body of doctrine on the counterattack and, within it, the role of reconnaissance.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ MG Michael T. Flynn’s 1994 SAMS Monograph expands on the counterattack as the culmination of the defense. Michael T. Flynn, “Climax or Conclusion: Culmination in the Defense.” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), 18-19.

⁷⁸ US Army Office of the G3/5/7. “Minutes and Taskings from Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) Combat Training Center (CTC) Huddle,” December 8, 2015.

⁷⁹ TRADOC PAM 525-3-1: *The US Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040*. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington DC, October, 2014.

While this monograph focused on reconnaissance, the other warfighting functions of the operational force also deserve a review of their role in this critical operation. The role of tactical reconnaissance forces is to confirm or deny the assumptions of the post-attack operational environment, allowing the commander to understand the situation and make informed decisions on the employment of his forces. Each warfighting function center of excellence can extrapolate its unique role from counterattack guidance as it appears in capstone doctrine. Through an appreciation of the counterattack by all military professionals, subordinates can implement the commander's vision quickly, nullifying the enemy's initial gains and allowing for rapid exploitation of the initiative. By understanding historical pitfalls and opportunities of the counterattack, military professionals become resilient amidst the worst conditions. Armed with this knowledge, the dynamic situation incites the commander and his staff to wrest the initiative from the attacker and exploit it in new and unexpected ways.

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